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THE LATIN VIEW OF THE MONROE DOCTRINE

BY LEOPOLD GRAHAME,

New York.

Although there are many conflicting opinions as to the ramifications of the Monroe Doctrine, it seems to me that the Latin view is that which must ultimately prevail in defining its status. The issue is clean-cut. It is whether the Monroe Doctrine is to be unilateral, or continental, in its operation; and upon this issue the retention of the doctrine as an integral part of the national policy of the United States must alone be determined. The considerations involved in this aspect of the question are vital to the commercial and political interests of the entire continent. Irrespective of the scope, or the limitations attaching to the famous pronouncement of President Monroe, its application must, in future, be dealt with even more from the standpoint of policy than from that of technical or convenient construction. The doctrine was ostensibly conceived and formulated exclusively in the interest and for the protection of all the American countries; and no selfish motive has ever been attributed to its original framers by any of the parties comprehended within its provisions. Its position, therefore, rests entirely on the territorial integrity of the American republics; and any other interpretation would make it an object of antipathy, not only to the Latin-American people, but to all the civilized powers of the world.

It has been urged by many eminent public men, including ex-President Roosevelt, that the very conditions which led to the adoption of the Monroe Doctrine conferred upon the United States not only by implication, but by necessity, the right to extend its protection of the Latin republics to the point of active intervention when the existence of disturbing conditions in any one of them might be thought to jeopardize its national independence. It should be remembered, however, that the United States has never assumed responsibility for the acts of those countries, but has, on the contrary, always maintained that, whilst it would not sanction the acquisition or occupation of the territory of an American republic by a foreign power, it would assist such power to protect its subjects from moral or

material injury in cases of national wrong-doing; and to that extent the doctrine, though not incorporated into international law, has been accepted without reserve by practically all of the European governments. Nor, indeed, are there to be found, so far as I am aware, any historical records to sustain the contention that the Monroe Doctrine is anything more than a logical culmination of an order of political ideas initiated by the declaration of American independence to separate the interests of the two hemispheres and to prevent European intervention in the internal affairs of the countries on this side of the Atlantic.

Let me ask in what cases the relations of a Latin republic with a European government might call for the reassertion of the Monroe Doctrine by the United States? The answer, I think, would be civil wars and insurrections; outrages inflicted upon foreigners; failure to fulfil contracts with them; their unlawful expulsion; and default in payment of public or private debts. These, in the abstract, would constitute the most likely reasons for a possible future application of the Monroe Doctrine; and within the last ten years we have had practical demonstration of the willingness of the great powers of Europe to accept the American view and to submit the differences arising out of such matters to the judicial methods of international courts of arbitration. Thus, the Monroe Doctrine, in its original and real sense, is universally established and admitted; and I cannot conceive either the moral or legal grounds upon which the United States can lay claim, in regard to the Latin republics, to a right so admittedly and so strongly denied to the nations of Europe.

We know from the fully recorded proceedings of the negotiations between President Monroe and the British government, preceding the formal declaration of the doctrine, that Mr. Canning, whilst adhering to its principles, steadfastly refused to allow the British government to become an official party to its formal establishment. The American minister, Mr. Rush, repeatedly informed his government of his belief that Great Britain had suspicions that the United States entertained designs of securing commercial advantages and of creating a hegemony on the American continent. Is it, then, surprising that, with latter-day occurrences in mind, the Latin-American republics should also entertain suspicions as to the motives underlying the various and frequently strained interpretations placed upon the Monroe Doctrine by many leaders of American thought?

It must be borne in mind that although successive Presidents of the United States, in recent years, have often stated, with undoubted sincerity, that this country has no idea of obtaining an inch of Latin-American territory by conquest, circumstances have arisen to justify the belief in many of the smaller republics of this continent that their complete independence is not quite so secure as they would wish. Common sense points to the conclusion that if, rightly or wrongly, the British government harbored doubts in the matter of American policy, in the early twenties of the nineteenth century, even in the face of the solemn declarations of such men as Monroe, Clay, Adams, Madison, Jefferson, Rush, Gallatin, and other equally conscientious and patriotic citizens, it can hardly be a matter of surprise that the Latin-American sense of security has been weakened by what has transpired in the recent past in the policy of the United States towards the sister republics. I do not for one moment assume or believe, that enlightened public opinion in this country, official or unofficial, regards either as desirable, or justifiable, encroachments upon the sovereign rights of the Latin-American nations. On the contrary, I assume and believe that the main purpose of the policy of the United States in relation to the other republics is to maintain and perpetuate their absolute independence. Therefore, I would further ask, what advantages are to be secured by the extension of the scope of the Monroe Doctrine beyond that so specifically expressed by its original founders?

The people of Latin America are of common origin. Their emancipation was secured by arduous struggles with their former oppressors; and an attack upon the dearly-bought independence of any one of the republics is reflected throughout them all. Their view of the Monroe Doctrine is that, although it has its origin in the United States, it is part of the international law of the American continent, where each nation is a distinct unit, with equal freedom and sovereignty and with no prerogative extended to any single one of them to control a continental policy. They regard the Monroe Doctrine as an instrument designed to proclaim the existence, in the western hemisphere, of independent nations, with the right to implant laws and institutions for the government of free people, without interference or dictation at the hands of the monarchies of Europe; but those republics would consider their last condition as worse than their first, if a distorted interpretation of the doctrine were to lead to any of

them becoming, what, for all practical purposes, would be vassals of the United States.

In a brilliant address recently delivered in Chile, Mr. Roosevelt dwelt at length upon the scope of the Monroe Doctrine in relation to the acquisition of territory on this continent by a European power; and referred specifically to two cases in which its operation would supersede treaty obligations. He said:

It was announced the other day in the South American press that the United States was about to agree to a treaty with Denmark which should provide that all questions, even those affecting national honor and interests, should hereafter be arbitrated. Under such a treaty Denmark would have the perfect right to sell the island of St. Thomas to any great military nation of Europe, and any arbitral court would decide that she had the right. Yet, no patriotic American of courage and sound intelligence would hesitate for a moment to say that, treaty or no treaty, such action could not be tolerated by the United States. In the same way, if Mexico chose to sell Magdalena Bay to some great Old World power, any arbitration court would decide that Mexico had the right to do so. Yet, it would be a criminal act for the United States to permit such a sale. As regards St. Thomas and as regards Magdalena Bay alike, not only would the Monroe Doctrine forbid the transfer of either to any foreign power, but, even if it did not, and if no such doctrine were in existence, the United States, if it possessed the slightest wisdom, could not permit such transfer to take place. It is worse than folly, it is mischievous hypocrisy, to make promises which ought not to be and would not be kept.

The same principles were enunciated in the Lodge resolution adopted by the United States Senate at the time of freely current rumors that Mexico was on the point of effecting a sale of Magdalena Bay to Japan. I make bold, however, to differ from the view implied by the distinguished authors of those pronouncements, for the simple and logical reason that the other parties to the arbitration treaties are fully acquainted with, and, in most cases, have recognized the purposes of the Monroe Doctrine; and so, in the event of such a point arising, could not reasonably demand its submission to arbitration, unless the transaction involved had been carried out with the express object of challenging enforcement of the doctrine. But it is not in this phase of the matter that the real danger exists. The doubts and suspicions of the Latin republics as to the ultimate aims of the United States are accentuated by the widening of the Monroe Doctrine to ends never contemplated by its authors. It is such incidents as those which have occurred in Mexico, in Nicaragua and in Colombia, that have led to a growing belief in the supposed desire on

the part of the United States to establish a suzerainty over some of the republics of Central and South America; and, even though there be no payment of a money tribute, or no open claim to the right of veto, or to the right of intervention in the internal affairs of the other states, the repetition of such acts as are here indicated, would, to all intents and purposes, confer the power of suzerainty upon the United States.

All Latin-American publicists concede that the Monroe Doctrine has indirectly conferred benefits upon the world at large and that the extraordinary development of some of the countries of South America is within certain limits, due to its existence and operation. This recognition may be seen in the subsidiary doctrine so ably expounded in December, 1902, by my distinguished friend, Dr. Luis M. Drago, then minister of foreign affairs of the Argentine Republic, and accepted by the Latin republics, as well as, with very slight modifications, by the United States. It may also be seen in the address delivered by the late Mr. Emilio Mitre, to the Argentine Chamber of Deputies, on the occasion of a visit to that country of Mr. Secretary Root. In one passage of his speech, Mr. Mitre said:

When President Monroe formulated his doctrine, he decreed peace between Europe and America. In short, the Monroe Doctrine was the veto of war between the countries of the two hemispheres; and from the ashes of the conflagration which had occurred prior to the declaration of that noble policy, there have grown up youthful nations which, today, are themselves strong enough to proclaim the same doctrine as the motto upon their national shields.

Ex-President Roosevelt truly describes the situation when he says that the Monroe Doctrine is looked upon with favor and is even welcomed as an American policy by the leading statesmen of South America; but what they approve and welcome is the Monroe Doctrine as they view it; and not as it is viewed by a great number of the public men of the United States. The Argentine Republic has special reasons for gratitude for the past existence of the Monroe Doctrine, not least amongst which are, that it was the first of the Latin-American republics to be recognized by the United States; and that it was enabled, largely through the re-assertion of that doctrine, to remain over a long period in undisturbed possession of the extensive and then undeveloped Patagonian territory, which is now becoming such a valuable national asset. Yet, knowing as I do, the honorable and liberty-loving character of the Argentine people, I venture to assert that

there is not a public man of that country who would sanction, for one moment, the further endorsement of the Monroe Doctrine, if he believed it implied a claim to intervention in the domestic concerns of even the least important of the American republics. The comments of the Argentine press on Dr. Drago's famous note to the minister of that republic at Washington clearly confirmed this view of their attitude towards the Monroe Doctrine. Some of the authorities of that country went even so far as to assert that if the official interpretation of that instrument, by the United States, is of such a character as to become a menace to the commercial interests of the European powers, the Argentine Republic would find itself unable to favor a policy whereby it would be drawn into a conflict with the countries whence it had derived its immigration and the capital which had developed its resources.

Looking at all these circumstances and at the change of conditions in all the American republics from those existing in their early stages of nationhood, there would appear to be little reason and less justification for the assumption, by the United States, of anything in the nature of a protectorate over them. This country has the right to adopt measures to secure the fullest protection of its citizens and their interests on the borders of a turbulent neighbor, such as every nation enjoys in other parts of the world; but it derives no prescriptive right from the Monroe Doctrine to encroach upon the independence of any other sovereign state.

Briefly summarized, the situation, as already stated, must be viewed alike from the standpoints of justice and expediency. Justice unquestionably demands the complete independence of all the republics of the New World. To deny this is to stultify the utterances of every President of the United States since the declaration of its independence. On the other hand, expediency dictates that "honesty is the best policy;" and that moral as well as material loss must necessarily follow the pursuance of a course of action which would alienate the sympathies and friendship of the twenty independent nations described as the Latin Republics of America. In other words, it would involve the sacrifice of commercial and industrial expansion to political considerations that would bring no corresponding advantages. The really sane view of the Monroe Doctrine is that its provisions should be enforced only against those who seek to violate them and not against those in whose interest they were framed.